

Draft State Youth Policy of Meghalaya

Vision	
<i>A sustainable, dynamic, secure, peaceful and prosperous future for our Youth</i>	
Objectives	Outcomes
Integrate youth development into the development agenda, policies, and programmes of the State at different levels. <i>Sustainable, prosperous, secure</i>	Comprehensive youth development: <i>Mainstreamed youth through multi-sectoral development approach</i>
Ensure effective and meaningful participation of youth in the process of formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes that impact their life. <i>Sustainable, dynamic</i>	Ownership, responsiveness, effectiveness, sustainability and greater impacts.
Foster in young people an abiding commitment to the principles and values enshrined in the Constitution of the country and also a spirit of community service. <i>Dynamic, peaceful</i>	Responsible citizenship
Promote a commitment in young people to protect ecology and environment. <i>Sustainable, prosperous</i>	Environmental sustainability
Make young people economically self-reliant and productive members of the society through access to holistic and quality education, training, skill and entrepreneurship development. <i>Secure, prosperous</i>	Economic empowerment through skilled and competent youth
Ensure equitable access to health, nutrition, sports (including indigenous sports games) and recreation opportunities for all sections of youth population. <i>Secure, dynamic</i>	Active and healthy youth (physical, social and mental well being)
Make youth active partners in eliminating all forms of discrimination and injustice, especially against socially and economically disadvantaged sections of the society. <i>secure, peaceful</i>	Just and equitable society Safe and secured environment
Promote and ensure gender equity. <i>Secure, peaceful</i>	Gender Justice
Address the special needs of marginalised and vulnerable youth. <i>Secure, prosperous</i>	Inclusive development
Preservation and promotion of indigenous knowledge, practices, languages, arts and culture. <i>sustainable</i>	Sustainability of diversity and uniqueness

Abbreviations
Foreword
Message
Acknowledgement
<p>Rationale</p> <p>The development of any society depends upon the ways in which youth are nurtured to become active and constructive forces of positive change. Young people in the state are viewed as major human resources for development and recognised as key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. They are the greatest source of hope for a Meghalaya's future. It is thus imperative to prepare young people as future leaders, guardians, advocates, entrepreneurs, and custodians of the state by addressing their current and future needs and aspirations. In recognising this, Meghalaya has invested resources to ensure that all young people get opportunities to grow in an enabling environment, develop and prosper as fully engaged, responsive and productive citizens.</p> <p>Youth constitute a unique group within Meghalaya who represent a positive force with the enormous potential to contribute to development. However, as they transit through the major stage of moving from the dependency of childhood to the autonomy and responsibility of adulthood, they are faced with many aspects of vulnerability. In contrast to their parents, young people in Meghalaya, today grow up in a different and complex world because of globalisation and the rapid spread of mass communication, multimedia, changing global economy, global violence and increasing access to drugs and alcohol. Besides limited life experience, inadequate resources and lack of decision-making skills, they are exposed to the risks of neglect, abuse and exploitation. Young people are most at risk from major socio-economic challenges including unemployment, low income, physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, crime and violence and a wide range of health issues, significantly HIV/AIDS and reproductive health with young women being most disadvantaged. The rising trend in these areas reported every year, necessitates greater and renewed impetus for synergized efforts in the planning, implementation and evaluation of youth programmes so that young people can have a future by choice, not by chance. Recognising the significance of youth in the development of the state and nation, the Government of Meghalaya has made substantial investments in youth development. Significant among them have been the establishment of the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs. The Government of Meghalaya vides Notification No: EDN-177/83/80 dated 18th March 1985 had set up a separate full-fledged Directorate for Sports and Youth Affairs. The Directorate is responsible for execution and efficient management of all works related to Youth & Sports. Traditionally the focus of the Directorate has been on the promotion of sports consequently the youth affairs relatively did not get adequate attention.</p> <p>Resource constraints, unclear and uncoordinated youth programmes, expanding youth population and absence of a state coordinating body have all limited the progress of these investments. The State Youth Policy will specifically aim at closing these gaps by addressing the challenges and recommending measures so that all</p>

youth can assume their rightful place in building a happier, prosperous, sustainable state and are fully prepared to lead the state into the future.

The rationale for the development of the State Youth Policy is thus, to provide a broad framework for youth engagement that endeavours to ensure all young men and women get support and meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential as they actively participate in society. The State Youth Policy addresses major concerns and issues critical for the youth of Meghalaya and gives direction to youth programmes and services provided by governmental, intergovernmental, private, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and youth organisations (YO). As a strategic document, the Policy will provide a common goal; set Policy priorities; propose recommendations for key interventions; and position Policy implementation within the context of institutional responsibilities and processes, emphasising cooperation and coordination among all relevant stakeholders. It will further provide a basis for identifying a dedicated and responsible organisation to synchronise, mainstream, monitor and evaluate youth development programmes in the state.

The State Youth Policy is an acknowledgement of the specific needs of young women and men, as well as a formal recognition of their unique contribution to state development. It provides a means and a symbol for the state as a whole to declare, commit, invest and engage in translating the vision of the policy 'A sustainable, dynamic, secure, peaceful and prosperous future for our Youth' into a reality. It provides an opportunity to give expression to state's understanding of values, rights and responsibilities as regard to young women and men. It provides the overarching vision for all programmes and activities relating to youth in the state.

Vision: A sustainable, dynamic, secure, peaceful and prosperous future for our Youth

Objectives:

The objectives of the SYP are to:

- Integrate youth development into the development agenda, policies, and programmes of the State at different levels.
- Ensure effective and meaningful participation of youth in the process of formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes that impact their life.
- Foster in young people an abiding commitment to the principles and values enshrined in the Constitution of the country and also a spirit of community service.
- Promote a commitment to young people to protect ecology and environment.
- Make young people economically self-reliant and productive members of the society through access to holistic and quality education, training, skill and entrepreneurship development.
- Ensure equitable access to health, nutrition, sports (including indigenous games) and recreation opportunities for all sections of the youth population.
- Make youth as active partners in eliminating all forms of discrimination and injustice, especially against socially and economically disadvantaged sections of the society.
- Promote and ensure gender equity.
- Address the special needs of marginalised and vulnerable youth.

- Preservation and promotion of indigenous knowledge, practices, languages, arts and culture.

Principles

Rights-based – designed and implemented within a human rights-based framework, in line with the state's commitments.

Inclusive – ensuring equal opportunities for every young person to achieve their full potential in life, including the elimination of barriers to inclusion, especially of vulnerable groups and enabling civic participation of all young people.

Participatory – designed, developed, implemented, monitored and evaluated with the meaningful participation of young people.

Gender-responsive – enabling specific actions to promote gender equity and to address gender-based disparities in all settings, from political to socio-economic and cultural.

Comprehensive – adopting a holistic approach to youth development, through increased collaboration across policy sectors, ministries and other relevant entities as well as by providing an integrated strategic framework that guides legislation and measures affecting youth.

Fully resourced – have adequate, transparent and dedicated resources for implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and maximising available resources through coordination and by enabling multi-stakeholder partnerships and shared ownership

Accountable – state and locally owned and led, and regularly monitored and evaluated, against specific youth development targets and indicators, with the active participation of youth.

Equity and accessibility - The Policy promote principles of equal opportunity and equitable distribution of programmes, services and resources.

Integration and holistic development - Focus on the integrated, cross-sectoral; and an interdisciplinary approach to the issues of young people's development and the mainstreaming of youth issues within state goals and programmes

Determining the Constituency

Defining youth

Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group. However, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly about education and employment, because 'youth' is often referred to as a person between the ages of leaving compulsory education, and finding his/her first job. The UN definition of youth is those in the age group of 15-24 years while the National Youth Policy (2014) defines youth as those belonging to the age bracket of 15-29 years. In the context of Meghalaya, due consideration has to be given to the fact that delayed education is a reality in many parts of the State. Along with this increasing aspiration for higher education and higher levels of unemployment puts many young people into a prolonged period of dependency on their families. Keeping the above in view, the Policy defines 'Youth' as all those people- males, females and transgender-belonging to the age group of **15to32**years.

Identifying target groups

Youth do not constitute a homogeneous group. Depending on their life situation and background, ethnicity and religion, their needs vary. This calls for different strategies for different groups of young people based on their needs. The SYP, therefore, categorises youth into the following target groups:

- Urban and Rural Youth
- Students and non-students.
- Youth belonging to ethnic and religious minorities specific to Meghalaya.
- Socially and economically disadvantaged youth
- Differently abled youth
- Vulnerable Youth
- Migrant/Emigrant Youth

Rights and Responsibilities of youth

It is easy to burden young people with a lot of expectations regarding what the State expects of them to do. However, a rights-based approach to youth calls for a clear delineation of their rights alongside responsibilities. It is only the recognition of their rights that would empower the youth to better discharge their responsibilities as active and responsible citizens. Accordingly, the Policy recognises the following rights along with responsibilities for the youth of the State.

Rights:

- Right to Equality.
- Right against Exploitation.
- Right to Freedom of Religion.
- Right to health services
- Right to gainful livelihood
- Right to information
- Right to participate in decision-making processes
- Quality Education and cultural right

Responsibilities

- To abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions,
- To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of Meghalaya, India and world-transcending religious, linguistic and regional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- To value and preserve the rich heritage and composite culture of the State and the Country as a whole;
- To protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures;
- To safeguard public property, to abjure violence and promote social harmony;
- To strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the Meghalaya and India constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement;
- To act as an active and responsible citizenship
- To serve the community through voluntary service

Thrust areas for action

The SYP covers 11 thrust areas, it looks in depth at the nature of the complex challenges and presents recommendations for action. These priority areas are interrelated and intrinsically linked. For example, juvenile delinquency and drug abuse are often direct consequences of insufficient opportunities for education, employment and participation. Investing in one area affects other priority areas as well thereby creating a multiplier effect in the lives of young people. Thrust areas for action emanate from the vision and objectives enunciated under the Policy. Often, there are competing demands for action in relation to a particular segment of the population. However, thrust areas are identified with specific reference to the situation obtaining in a State and resources both human and material available. The Policy identifies the following 11 thrust areas for action as far as the youth of the State are concerned.

1. Education – formal, non-formal and continuing education
2. Gainful employment through quality education, training, skill development and entrepreneurship development programmes
3. Promotion of national unity, values, social harmony and promotion of local traditions and culture.
4. Environmental conservation, protection and restoration.
5. Gender equity
6. Inclusion and social justice
7. Health and healthy lifestyle
8. Sports and recreation
9. Youth Participation
10. Promotion of arts and crafts- both traditional and modern.
11. Conflict management and peace building.

Policy Interventions, programmes and services

After identifying thrust areas for action, the Policy lays down what needs to be done in terms of specific interventions, be they in the domain of policies, programmes and services under each thrust area.

Thrust Area-01: Education

Education is a top priority in youth issues. It serves as a crosscutting issue that affects everything from employment to health. Important years of a young person's development are spent in school. Though progress has been made in enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education, challenges remain. Many parents in the states are still unable to send their children to higher education because of local social and economic conditions. Though the current generation of youth is the best-educated so far, the quality of education and its capacity to prepare young people for the labour market are major concerns. With a total literacy rate of 85%, the state is more or less at the national average. The Right to Education enhanced enrolment of children in the primary education system although high dropout rate was observed approximately one lakh students giving up school. Education and Literacy Minister Deborah C Marak told the Assembly, "The main causes of dropouts are the economic condition of the parents, lack of success due to small habitation, poor teaching, domestic and sibling care and migration."¹A large number of dropouts between

¹<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/education/story/meghalaya-schools/1/908313.html>

primary and secondary, and higher secondary levels reflects a critical window in the educational trajectory of young people. During the formative years of life, adolescents also need critical knowledge and skills to manage physical, mental and social changes. The life skills based adolescent sexual and reproductive health education help adolescent to manage changes experienced during adolescence and enrich education system to meet expectations of key constituencies.

Policy Recommendations

- Restructure and review the current Education Curriculum to better adapt to the needs of the youth.
- Promote merit-based national and international educational exposure/exchange programs for both rural and urban youth.
- Integrate life skills, physical education, community service, financial literacy and entrepreneurship in the educational curricula.
- Set up a network of specialised agencies for developing appropriate educational and awareness programmes for youth and community-based organisations on disaster management and responsible use of natural resources.
- Create educational opportunities through grants and scholarships for underprivileged youth of the State. This should be a collaborative initiative of the state agencies, civil society organisations and the private sector.
- Scale up educational opportunities for differently abled youth.
- Facilitate access to reputed coaching centres by way of scholarships for youth of the state to compete in all India level services.
- Institutionalise vocational education from high schools onwards and special emphasis should be given to train youth who are not in the education system or drop outs..
- Institutionalise Career Counselling in the school education system to facilitate students to choose an appropriate career path.
- Ensure meaningful engagement of youth/youth organisations in the educational committees as members at all levels.

Thrust Area-02: Gainful Employment

Employment of the youth is a high priority agenda for the Government. In the state of Meghalaya, with the lack of industrial sector, underdeveloped agriculture and small size of the service sector, employment opportunities are limited in relation to supply of labour. In spite of significant improvement in enhancing vocational skills and employment opportunities, underemployment and unemployment remains an issue mostly affecting young people. It is therefore, imperative to take effective measures for enhancing access to employment opportunities that match the abilities of young people. There is need to nurture entrepreneurship among the youth and enable them to access finance and technology and promote business and employment opportunities for youth in the State. A large number of young people migrate within and outside the State in search of a livelihood. The majority of them are employed in the informal and unorganised sector. There is a large population of dropout youth, and many of them opt for vocational training to join the skilled workforce. There lies huge untapped potential of young people to enter a traditional trade and improve their chances of engagement with long-term employment including self-employment

and entrepreneurship. However, the female participation in the workforce in the urban areas of Meghalaya is significantly higher than the All India level.

Policy Recommendations

- Review the existing skill development situation in the State in the light of Skills Development: An Appraisal of Meghalaya (2015 – A study sponsored by the NITI Aayog, Government of India).
- Appraise the existing skill development centres leading to their accreditation and strengthening of capacity where necessary.
- Ensure linkage of Skill Development Programmes with appropriate placement support.
- Organise Entrepreneurship Development Programme through reputed institutions for potential young entrepreneurs to start up their ventures.
- Organise periodic “career Melas (fairs)” with the active participation of the private sector in order to open greater avenues of employment for young people.
- Provide hand holding support to young entrepreneurs and facilitate forward and backward linkages.
- Promote internship programmes in public and private sectors to enable youth to acquire employability experience and skills.

Thrust Area-03: Promotion of National Unity, Values & Traditions etc.

National integration is highly necessary for a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-caste, multi-regional society like India. Amidst socio-cultural, regional, religious, linguistic and economic diversities, national integration aims at the process of uniting together various parts of the society into a “functions whole”, wherein there shall be “reduction of all barriers and tolerance of all differences unity, shared values and consensus.” Values should not be treated as ideal concepts but as ‘empowering tools’ which are helpful in meeting the challenges of the contemporary social world-be its religious fundamentalism, environmental degradation, multi-cultural conflicts, misuse of science and technology, inequalities, ill effects of mass media, globalisation, commercialization and so on. The very nature of value education implies empowering the youth with certain attitudes and skills as well as giving them the critical ability to use them in the contemporary world, full of myriad challenges. The right attitude towards globalisation can serve as a vehicle for the promotion of interconnectivity and interdependence. While we promote national integration, we must also cultivate values required to live in harmony with global society. Meghalaya often face the conflict between tradition and modernization, and young people have uneasy attitudes in relation to tradition and modernization. It is important to make young people develop attitudes where they do not see everything in tradition as bad or everything in modernization as good. There are many things positive about the traditional culture which needs to be appreciated and understood.

Policy Recommendations

- Incorporate national values and local traditions in the educational curriculum
- Promote mutual understanding and respect for diversity through scaling up of state and national level integration camps; sports meets and exposure visits.

- Identify 'Youth Icons' from the State to act as 'ambassadors' for promoting national values and social harmony.
- Encourage singing of the National Anthem and taking the pledge for national unity in educational institutions.
- Celebrate State and National festivals in youth clubs and educational institutions.
- Integrate the concept of national unity and values in the training programmes of all youth organisations.
- Celebrate Meghalaya Youth Day on 17th July every year to inculcate the spirit of patriotism, national integration and respect for diversity.

Thrust Area-04: Environmental conservation, protection and restoration.

The deterioration of the natural environment is one of the principal concerns of young people as it has direct implications for their well-being both now and in the future. Young people have a distinctly unique stake in the fight against climate change. Their decisions and actions over the next few years will shape the world we live in for the rest of our lives. The state of Meghalaya is rich in natural resources. The most important natural resources on which the economy of the state is largely dependent upon are forests, mineral and water resources. During the past few decades, there has been excessive pressure on these resources through over-exploitation, misuse and overuse either for sustenance or developmental purposes. Such activities have not only depleted the natural resources but also have led to a considerable deterioration in the quality of the environment. The life support systems viz., air, land, water and vegetation are under strain. The key environmental concerns in Meghalaya constitute deforestation, fragmentation of forests, soil degradation, biodiversity loss and contamination of water bodies. Since the state is predominantly mountainous, deforestation and the resultant loss of soil, especially in the hill areas, are leading to increased siltation of rivers and streams. The increasing anthropogenic stresses of various kinds in the state may further aggravate the environmental problems in the future. The recorded forest area in the state is 9, 496 sq. km (State of Forest Report, 2003). According to satellite imageries, the forest cover of Meghalaya in 1980 was 69.06%, and in 15 years the forest area has been reduced to 63.09%. The trend of forest cover shows that during 1980-89, maximum deforestation took place. Shifting cultivation which is widely practiced in the state, mining of coal and limestone, urbanisation and industrialisation are the major factors contributing to the depletion of forest cover in the state. The state of Meghalaya is rich in plant diversity with 3,128 species of flowering plants including 1,237 endemic species and several valuable medicinal plant species. Meghalaya has estimated coal reserves of 559 million tonnes (MT), spread over an area of 213.9 sq. km (approximately 1 per cent of the total geographical area of the state). Despite its large reserves of coal, domestic consumption is low due to the absence of industrial activity; consequently, the state is a large exporter of coal. Among the mineral resources, coal, limestone, uranium and quartz are the important ones, of which coal and limestone are being extracted in large quantities. The unregulated excessive coal mining has damaged the environment to a large extent in the state through forest clearing, and increase in

acidity of soil and water. The rural areas are badly affected by unscientific mining activities being carried out in different parts of the state.²

Policy Recommendations

- Establish Ecological Clubs at School, College and Community Levels and conduct regular awareness camps.
- Institutionalise Swatch Bharat Abhiyan in the education system by earmarking 2 hours/week towards a cleaner and greener Meghalaya.
- Ensure youth participation in formal and informal governance/decision-making processes relating to Natural Resource Management.
- Scale up training programmes involving youth on Disaster Management.
- Create a State register of trained volunteers to facilitate speedy deployment in case of natural disasters.
- Identify and ensure access to financial assistance for youth-led initiatives relating to the environment.
- Promote responsible utilisation of natural resources by incentivizing young entrepreneurs to set up environment-friendly enterprises.

Thrust Area-05: Gender Equity

Women in Meghalaya are believed to be better placed and to have more autonomy than their counterparts in the rest of the country. Women are respected, honoured and placed in a high position. It is true of Meghalaya where women get the rightful place with honour and dignity in the home, class and the society. Another feature of the society in Meghalaya is that women are free from many of the social restraints of the larger Indian society. There is no caste system, untouchability or social inequality. It is so because the three major tribes of Meghalaya – the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos follow the matrilineal structure of society. Matrilineal societies as widely understood confer more autonomy on women, as compared to patrilineal societies. Examining the gender roles in the matrilineal societies in Meghalaya one cannot ignore the complementary nature of the structured roles. The traditional gender roles have been construed in a way that men and women could not function in isolation. However, it is important to note that the relatively high status of women in Meghalaya also entails higher responsibilities for a woman. Though in the matrilineal society of Meghalaya women are free from many of the social restraints and problems of the larger Indian society like dowry, bride burning, female feticide neglect of girl child and other evils. The society has other problems like poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, high dropout rates, early marriages, broken marriages and divorce. Women have been subsumed to be weaker physically as well as mentally by the society. It has led many women to bear violence in multiple forms silently within the four walls of their homes. Even in a matrilineal society, homes are not free of domestic violence with consequential effects on women and children. Family violence is a cognizable offence, but very few women take advantage of it due to ignorance of the legal rights and provisions.³ In the year 2013, 103 rape cases were registered in police stations across the state. A progressive degeneration of moral values and large

² Environmental Concerns in Meghalaya –Planning Department – Government of Meghalaya, India, <http://megplanning.gov.in/report/vision2030/chapter8.pdf>

³Meghalaya Human development Report 2008

floating population comprising illegal immigrants, through the years, has resulted in numerous illicit activities which include sexual offences, kidnapping and human trafficking. A glance at the crime statistics of Meghalaya indicates a steady rise in gender-based violence over the past decade, with incidents of rape, molestation, kidnapping and domestic violence of women showing an increasing trend. The past decade has witnessed a steep rise in crimes against women in the matrilineal state of Meghalaya, where ladies have a special status in society and once held in high esteem.⁴

Policy Recommendations

- Organise sensitization programmes for youth addressing violence/crimes against women.
- Ensure balanced representation of males, females and the third gender in youth delegations at all levels.
- Mainstream gender concerns in all youth development policies and programmes.

Thrust Area-06: Inclusion and Social Justice

It is widely recognised that social exclusion produces deep and long-term damage to the living conditions, social and economic participation, emotional life, and health status of young people. It also contributes to the intergenerational transmission of poverty. In turn, insecurity in living standards, political and social isolation, feelings of estrangement and unhealthy lifestyles aggravate pre-existing conditions of the social exclusion. This results in a vicious circle where socially excluded young people are in even more danger of suffering from additional material deprivation, social and emotional marginalisation, and health issues, which in turn expose them to more serious risks of exclusion. The State shall offer opportunities for preventing and remedying this vicious circle by offering young people targeted support, opportunities for non-formal learning, information on health and well-being, and opportunities for positive integration into the local community. The scheme of Social Justice is very well incorporated in the various provisions of the Indian Constitution. The Preamble of the Constitution includes the terms like 'Socialist', 'Social and Economic Justice', 'Equality' etc., which specify that the state would extensively involve in social welfare of people, and would try to establish an egalitarian society. Moreover, a distinct chapter of Directive Principles of State Policy has been dedicated towards the welfare responsibilities of the government, which lays down the norms of ideal governance for people's welfare. Various fundamental rights and its subsequent amendments also intended to ensure social justice to the disadvantaged citizens. The popular contention that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer largely based on fact, particularly within the present global context. The failure to actively pursue justice is not without consequences. From the comprehensive global perspective shaped by the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, neglect of the pursuit of social justice in all its dimensions translates into de facto acceptance of a future marred by violence, repression and chaos. Inclusive growth demands that all social groups have equal access to the services provided by the State and equal opportunity for upward economic and social mobility. It is also necessary to ensure that there is no discrimination against any section of our society.

⁴ Crimes against Women in Matrilineal Meghalaya A Forensic Medical Perspective Amarantha Donna Ropmay

Policy Recommendations

- Mainstream and rehabilitate juvenile delinquents, youth in protective custody, substance dependent, surrendered militants, etc.
- Set up Special Schools in every district.
- Provide disabled-friendly services.
- Provide legal protection against stigma and discrimination involving people living with HIV/AIDS, substance abuse and victims of sexual abuse.
- Ensure integration of inclusion and social justice in policies and programmes.
- Formulate Meghalaya Youth Index after every five years to assess the situation of youth and youth development in the state.

Thrust Area-07: Youth Participation

Young people constitute a high and peaking proportion of Meghalaya's population. The youth bulge represents both a challenge and an opportunity for development. Its duration is a limited window in which to develop a larger and younger workforce who can drive economic development and play a significant role in the social development of their communities and society.⁵ In response to the state-wide phenomenon of young men and women calling for meaningful civic, economic, social and political participation, the Government of Meghalaya recognises the involvement of young men and women in participatory decision-making and development processes as vital to achieving sustainable development of the State. The State will ensure meaningful involvement of youth in the process of identifying needs, exploring solutions, making decisions and planning action within communities and organisations that seek to support society. The State respects the value of young people as assets, advisors, innovators, partners and stakeholders. It will provide opportunities for youth to take ownership of the process mobilise others and become powerful role models. It is important to be inclusive in planning and working with youth, placing particular emphasis on engaging young people who have traditionally been inadequately included in community youth development opportunities and recognising and valuing diversity. With a mission to promote and encourage the talent pool of Meghalaya and recognise their efforts and contribution in various fields, youth participation is very necessary.

Policy Recommendations

- Establish youth clubs in each village in collaboration with NYKS and such other youth organisations.
- Establish a State Youth Council and District Youth Councils to ensure meaningful participation of youth in all policy making/governance structures on issues affecting young people.
- Promote youth participation in local self-governance structures such as village councils.
- Develop a customised Meghalaya Youth Leadership Programme to train potential youth leaders.
- Encourage political parties to promote youth participation in electoral politics at all levels.

⁵ UNFPA 2007, NORAD 2005, DANIDA 2007, DFID 2007, World Bank 2007, UN 2007, and Africa Commission 2009

- Encourage participation of socially and ethnically marginalised youth at all levels.
- Ensure active and substantive engagement of young people from diverse backgrounds in the state-level planning, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programmes related to the Sustainable Development Goals since progress on the SDGs will significantly influence the lives of young people.
- Promote Volunteerism by involving youth in community service through mandatory credit system in schools and higher education.

Thrust Area-08: Health and Healthy Lifestyle

Young people are living, learning and negotiating transitions into adulthood in an increasingly complex and challenging world. Young people have significant opportunities available to them, but also unprecedented uncertainty and risk. Successful transition into independence requires resilience, emotional intelligence and positive social and emotional health. Improving the health and well-being of adolescents and youth is crucial for their well-being today and for their future economic productivity. Because behaviour and health developed during these stages of life are key predictors of the adult burden of disease, and because health – like education – is a key factor in the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Better youth health is dependent on the provision of high-quality health services but is also much intertwined with factors falling outside the realm of the health sector. Poverty, in all its dimensions, undermines health and well-being through a variety of pathways. Poor nutrition, for example, impacts negatively on a young person's capacity to learn, progress through school and earning potential. Poor living conditions and physical inactivity lead to a higher burden of chronic respiratory and heart disease. Exposure to domestic violence and harsh discipline increases the risk of young people becoming either victims or perpetrators of violence. Individual factors such as delinquency and substance abuse impact on young people's well-being and are predictors of future ill health. Family level factors such as the absence of warm, positive parenting, as well as community level elements such as gang violence, for instance, impact on the emotional health of youth and may, in turn, undermine educational outcomes and employment chances. Adolescence and young adulthood are times of rapid physical and psychosocial change and development. They are stages in which parental influence decreases and the influence of peers and media increases. As a result, these stages are often associated with a rise in experimentation and exploration, a search for identity, and a consequent increase in the risky behaviour, alcohol and substance use and abuse, possible sexual and reproductive health (SRH) problems, violence and mental illness. Meghalaya, a state with varying topographical features and climatic conditions, exhibits a varied disease profile. There are diseases which are endemic and recurring in nature such as Malaria, Cholera and Dysentery, and also other diseases such as Tuberculosis, Visual Impairment, Cancer, and HIV/AIDS. In spite of several constraints, overall health care in Meghalaya has improved considerably according to the Directorate of Observation and Treatment, Government of India.⁶ Meghalaya has come a long way in improving citizens' health status in the last 25 years, yet there are aspects that need improvement; for instance,

⁶ MEGHALAYA HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2008

reduction in maternal mortality and morbidity.⁷ Many health institutions lack adequate infrastructure.

Policy Recommendations

- Integrate adolescent sexual and reproductive health in the educational curricula.
- Setup youth-friendly health and counselling centres in sub-divisions & district level hospitals besides secondary schools, colleges and universities
- Scale up and strengthen the existing primary health care system to ensure availability, accessibility and affordability of health care services.
- Scale up and strengthen drug and alcohol de-addiction centres to cover all the sub-divisions/districts of the State.
- Conduct awareness programmes on HIV AIDS, drugs/substance abuse, cleanliness and hygiene to promote healthy behaviour.
- Strengthen functional linkages and collaboration with agencies dealing with health issues for financial resources and technical support.
- Develop a customised programme for adolescents and young people on balanced nutrition and healthy lifestyle.
- Create a cadre of trained youth ambassadors for a healthy Meghalaya.
- Design and implement targeted interventions to reduce maternal and infant mortality rate.
- Assess the situation of Youth Health to reduce the vulnerability of youth through comprehensive Youth Health Programme.

Thrust Area-09: Sports and recreation

Recognition of the contribution sport-based approaches can make to development, and peace-building objectives has grown markedly over the last ten years. The United Nations General Assembly support for Resolution 66/7, promoting the contribution sport can make to international development goals, marks the tenth consecutive year that the Assembly has passed a resolution recognising the interplay of sport, development and peace-building.⁸ Sport teaches us the importance of cultural identities in a language which exists outside the boundaries of race and religion. Sport provides us with a platform, shaped by the intrinsic values of fair play, non-discrimination, respect for others, respect for rules, and teamwork, to promote and protect diversity. Sport has the power to unify diverse populations, offering a neutral “playing field” encouraging dialogue and understanding between peoples. Sport is a tool for citizen education. And, in an increasingly globalised world, sport provides a framework for action, a universal language and a means of building bridges between peoples and between communities, transcending conflicts and subverting conditions of inequity. The State assigns high importance to promote sports and recreational activities among youth for ensuring their mental and physical development. The higher the number of persons involved in sports, the better is the probability of a healthy state. Meghalaya Government has formulated a draft State Sports Policy with a vision to position itself as a leading sporting State in India and to excel in sports at International level. However, sports and recreational activities remain an underdeveloped domain largely due to lack of basic infrastructure at the grassroots

⁷ Reaching the Unreached Rapid Assessment Studies of Health Programmes Implementation in India

⁸ <http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/Strengthening%2BSport%2Bfor%2BDevelopment%2Band%2BPeace%2BEB.pdf>

level, and academic-centric education system. The participations of athletes from Meghalaya in major games and competitions in Regional, National and International sports events and successful organisation of South Asian Games (SAG) in collaboration with the Government of Assam demonstrate the capability of the State. The State Sports Policy 2017 aims at promoting the participations in Sports and Games by all the residents of the State with an aspiration to higher achievement in sports.⁹

Policy Recommendations

- Make recreational facilities mandatory in all educational institutions and at community levels.
- Create adequate sporting infrastructure and ensure accessibility to facilities at all levels.
- Organise sports competitions involving indigenous and modern sports starting from the block level.
- Establish an Academy of Excellence for the promotion of potential sport(s) in the State.
- Promote sports for development and peace.

Thrust Area-10: Promotion of arts and crafts- both traditional and modern

Meghalaya is a land of unique culture and traditions. Meghalaya is one of the seven northeastern states known for its exquisite bamboo and cane products, weaving and wood carving. The people of Meghalaya consisting of three ancient hill communities - the Garos, Khasis and the Jaintias have a special skill of crafting and making traditional bamboo and cane products. Most of the tribes are engaged in different types of handicraft making including bamboo and cane products. The art and craft of Meghalaya have a uniqueness of its own. They are very intricately made and beautiful to look. Tourist coming to the north-eastern part is mesmerised to see the sheer wonder of art and craft of Meghalaya. Preservation, documentation, research, promotion, development and augmentation of arts and culture in the State continue to be the important objectives of the Arts and Culture Department.¹⁰ Culture has the power to transform entire societies, strengthen local communities and forge a sense of identity and belonging for people of all ages. As a vector for youth development and civic engagement, culture plays an essential role in promoting sustainable social and economic development for future generations. Youth can act as a bridge between cultures and serve as key agents in promoting peace and intercultural understanding. Different groups of young people in Meghalaya are increasingly involved in the promotion of arts and crafts, recognising that it does not only belong to the past but is also part of their identity. Transmitting the values of arts and crafts to young people favours intercultural understanding, respect for cultural diversity and helps create an environment propitious to a culture of peace. Heritage related initiatives clearly demonstrate that culture is an indispensable driver and enabler of sustainable development. Heritage provides testimonies too, and links between, the past and present. Transmitting the values of intercultural understanding, cultural diversity and creating a sustainable environment from one generation to the next is

⁹ Meghalaya Draft Sports Policy 2017

¹⁰ <http://megartsculture.gov.in/>

essential if the seeds of peace are to be planted and nurtured by future generations. The Meghalaya Government initiates young people to these principles through involving them as active partners and stakeholders in both its on-the-ground and normative actions. Today's generation of youth are looking for opportunities to express themselves. The benefits of creative self-expression are many—from increasing young people's problem-solving ability to stimulating their community involvement; from fostering teamwork to strengthening self-confidence. Creativity also contributes to society at large —fostering new approaches to solving old problems. One of the greatest advantages of arts-based approaches is sparking young people's active involvement in youth-serving programs. Arts-based programs not only benefit those young people who participate, but their peers, parents, and community members who attend performances, watch plays, and behold exhibitions of youth produced arts.

Policy Recommendations

- Promote knowledge and skills about indigenous arts and crafts through the school curriculum.
- Set up arts and crafts training centres at all districts of the State.
- Ensure participation of young artists and artisans in all state, regional and national level festivals and exhibitions.
- Institute scholarships for promising artists and artisans to pursue higher academy courses.
- Institute state level awards for outstanding young artists and performers.
- Setup an Academy of Excellence for the promotion of visual and performing arts.

Thrust Area-11: Conflict management and peace building

In conflict- and violence-affected contexts, young people are commonly perceived as either perpetrators or victims of violence with young men usually assumed to be the primary perpetrators and young women the primary victims, especially of sexual and gender-based violence. Throughout the world, more than 600 million young people live in fragile and conflict-affected contexts today.¹¹ They are among the most affected by the multiple and often interlinked forms of violence from political violence and criminal gangs to organised crime and terrorist attacks that plague their countries and communities, bearing enormous and long-lasting human, social and economic costs.¹² Over the past decade, the involvement of some young people particularly young men, but also increasingly young women in violence and extremist groups has led some to paint youth generally as a threat to global security and stability. But research shows that youth who participate actively in violence are a minority, while the majority of youth despite the injustices, deprivations and abuse they confront daily, particularly in conflict contexts are not violent and do not participate in violence. Moreover, a growing body of evidence suggests that young women and

¹¹ United Nations Development Programme, UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017: Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future (New York, 2014). Available from http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Youth/UNDP_Youth-Strategy-2014-17_Web.pdf

¹² World Bank, World Development Report 2011 (Washington, D.C., 2011).

men can and do play active roles as agents of peace and constructive change. Meghalaya is one of the less troubled states in the Northeast. Despite its rich natural resources it suffers from economic stagnation which accentuates its socio-political and ethnic problems. The state has diverse ethnic and cultural groups, each with its distinct traditional and cultural systems. Meghalaya is the relatively peaceful place, amid the otherwise conflict-ridden region of India's northeast. This specific image was largely due to the peaceful nature of the process through which Meghalaya acquired its independent statehood. The absence of any large-scale violence in recent times has also enhanced the state's peace credentials. However, the reclamation of tribal identity in the new state amid gnawing scarcities led to a range of conflicts. The rise of ethnocentric politics emerged as the major plank around which much identity-based conflict transpired. Predicated on the cultural superiority of two tribal communities the Khasis and the Garos over the nontribal population, reservation policy, politically motivated ethnocentrism led to the commission of violent acts against the non-tribal population of Meghalaya. Around 23 percent see a threat, and a similar number is not certain. Thus, the threat perception is not absent completely but is not the predominant one. Despite the conflicts due to reservation policy, as many as 81 percents would be ready to appoint a capable person for a job, irrespective of his/her community. In order to promote peace and harmony between the Garos and the Khasis and instil in them the hope of developing in unity and harmony, it will be necessary to strengthen common platforms. It also shows that the Garo-Khasi tension is a major challenge in Meghalaya today. There is a need to search for a constructive intervention to avoid violence.¹³

Policy Recommendations

- Organise sensitization programmes on the culture of peace for members of all youth clubs.
- Create a cadre of Youth Ambassadors for Peace through a customised training programme.
- Conduct school level competitions on peace and social harmony.
- Support youth strategies and programmes that promote youth-led initiatives that go beyond capital elites, and foster intergenerational dialogue and collaboration.

Institutional Framework, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of the SYP:

Institutional Framework

State Youth Committee

Successful implementation of any Policy depends on a comprehensive, horizontal and cross-sectoral co-operation and co-ordination between various departments and agencies that in some way address issues that impact young people. It is important, therefore, to create an inter-ministerial and inter-agency structure to ensure better coordination and seamless mainstreaming of youth issues and concerns. Although some departments and agencies have programmes targeting youth, they often work in isolation and duplicate programmes which become unsustainable. Establishment of a coordination mechanism will result in a strong sense of ownership for the SYP on the part of all stakeholders. Keeping this in view, the SYP proposes to establish a Committee to be headed by the Chief Minister for providing

¹³ Conflict Mapping And Peace Processes in North East India - Lazar Jeyaseelan

policy directions, setting the agenda and mobilising resources for youth development in the State. This will ensure optimum utilisation of resources available with different departments and streamline policy and programme interventions. It will also raise the profile of youth issues and ensure that all state policies and plans integrate a youth development perspective in the planning process, allocate adequate budget and appoint a Nodal Officer to deal with youth mainstreaming within the departments and agencies. This Committee will ensure that State policies and plans affecting youth are aligned with the principles, values, objectives and recommendations of the SYP.

The Committee will have Ministers from the following Departments as members.

1. *Agriculture*
2. *Finance*
3. *Commerce*
4. *Industries*
5. *Planning*
6. *Tourism*
7. *Soil & Water Conservation*
8. *Disaster Management*
9. *School Education & Literacy*
10. *Higher & Technical Education*
11. *District Council Affairs*
12. *Border Areas Development*
13. *Community & Rural Development*
14. *Forests & Environment*
15. *Social Welfare*
16. *Health and Family Welfare*
17. *Information Technology*
18. *Home (Police)*
19. *Sports & Youth Affairs*
20. *Municipal Administration*
21. *Labour and Employment*
22. *Arts & Culture*

Also, the Chief Minister may invite representatives from Civil Society Organizations working for/with young people and also nominate prominent youth leaders to be members of this committee. Departments other than listed above may also be invited to the meetings of the committee as and when required. The Committee shall meet once in every six months.

State Youth Council and District Youth Councils

The State Youth Council to be headed by the Minister, Sports and Youth Affairs shall act as an Implementing and Review Body on all matters relating to youth. It will have representation from diverse youth organisations and prominent youth leaders to be nominated by the Minister. District Youth Councils to be headed by the Deputy Commissioner of the district would similarly have as members the representatives of youth organisations and clubs besides prominent youth leaders from within the district.

The State Government shall formulate detailed operational guidelines in respect of the composition and functioning of these councils in consultation with young people.

Strengthening of structures

Currently, the primary focus of the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs in the State is on sports development. This needs to change because sports is not the panacea for all the problems of young people. The department needs to have designated officers for youth development in all the districts with supporting staff to implement youth-centric programmes, besides sports. The State Directorate of Sports and Youth Affairs similarly needs to be restructured with the posting of officers at the level of joint/deputy directors for youth development.

Youth Resource Centre

Given the paucity of information and data relating to youth, it is necessary to establish a Youth Resource Centre under the Directorate of Sports and Youth Affairs.

Budget allocations

The budget of the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs in the State is not only grossly inadequate but also heavily weighted in favour of sports programmes. In order to achieve the objectives of the SYP, the departmental budget needs to be augmented significantly with proportionally adequate funds for youth development programmes suggested under the Policy.

Implementation Plan

Prepare an Implementation Plan for the SYP within six months of the approval of the Policy. This plan should be a consultative effort involving all departments and agencies- both in the government and outside- whose work would likely impact the lives of young people in the State. It should take into account what is currently being done and what needs to be done additionally in order to fulfil the objectives of the Policy. Accordingly, it should lay down specific targets with provision for additional resources wherever required. Alongside, assess the institutional capacity of departments and agencies to identify gaps and develop strategies as part of an HR Policy to strengthen the institutional capacity of agencies and youth work professionals, where necessary. The Plan should have a set of indicators and timelines for its effective implementation.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the SYP

- Develop a comprehensive M&E framework to assess the progress made against the Implementation Plan. Set up a monitoring and coordination committee headed by the Minister In-charge/Secretary Department of Sports and Youth Affairs. This structure should have representation from other departments/agencies working in the area of youth development including young people's representation through the State Youth Council. Monitoring should be done through scientifically developed tools and on the basis of proper indicators. This body should meet once in every quarter.
- The SYP and its implementation plan should be reviewed through a mid-term evaluation exercise to be carried out by an internal committee. The final

evaluation of the impact of the SYP and its Implementation Plan should be done by a reputed and independent agency after the completion of policy period which shall be five years.

Review of the State Youth Policy

The State Government should review the existing SYP based on the outcomes of the final evaluation and the changing socio-economic dynamics and consider formulating a new one in its place after expiry of the current policy.

Actions	Lead Department/A gency	Supporting Agencies	Budget	Timeline
Education				
Restructure and review the current Education Curriculum to better adapt to the needs of the youth.				
Promote merit based national and international educational exposure/exchange programs for both rural and urban youth.				
Integrate life skills, physical education, community service, financial literacy and entrepreneurship in the educational curricula.				
Set up a network of specialised agencies for developing appropriate educational and awareness programmes for youth and community-based organizations on disaster management and responsible use of natural resources.				
Create educational opportunities through grants and scholarships for under privileged youth of the State. This should be a collaborative initiative of the state agencies, civil society organisations and the private sector.				
Scale up educational opportunities for differently abled youth.				
Facilitate access to reputed coaching centres by way of scholarships for youth of the state to				

compete in all India level services.				
Institutionalize vocational education from high schools onwards and special emphasis should be given to train youth who are not in the education system or drop outs.				
Institutionalize Career Counselling in the school education system to facilitate students to choose an appropriate career path.				
Ensure meaningful engagement of youth/youth organisations in the educational committees as members at all levels.				
Gainful Employment:				
Review the existing skill development situation in the State in the light of Skills Development: An Appraisal of Meghalaya(2015 – A study sponsored by the NITI Aayog, Government of India).				
Appraise the existing skill development centres leading to their accreditation and strengthening of capacity where necessary.				
Ensure linkage of Skill Development Programmes with appropriate placement support.				
Organise Entrepreneurship Development Programme through reputed institutions for potential young entrepreneurs to start up their ventures.				

Organise periodic “career melas(fairs)” with active participation of the private sector in order to open greater avenues of employment for young people.				
Provide hand holding support to young entrepreneurs and facilitate forward and backward linkages.				
Promote internship programmes in public and private sectors to enable youth to acquire employability experience and skills.				
Promotion of National Unity, Values & Traditions etc.				
Incorporate national values and local traditions in the educational curriculum				
Promote mutual understanding and respect for diversity through scaling up of state and national level integration camps, sports meets and exposure visits.				
Identify ‘Youth Icons’ from the State to act as ‘ambassadors’ for promoting national values and social harmony.				
Encourage singing of the National Anthem and taking of the pledge for national unity in educational institutions.				
Celebrate State and National festivals in youth clubs and educational institutions.				
Integrate the concept of national unity and values in				

the training programmes of all youth organisations.				
Celebrate Meghalaya Youth Day on 17th July every year to inculcate the spirit of patriotism, national integration and respect for diversity.				
Environmental conservation, protection and restoration.				
Establish Ecological Clubs at School, College and Community Levels and conduct regular awareness camps.				
Institutionalize Swatch Bharat Abhiyan in the education system by earmarking 2 hours/week towards a cleaner and greener Meghalaya.				
Ensure youth participation in formal and in-formal governance/decision making processes relating to Natural Resource Management.				
Scale up training programmes involving youth on Disaster Management.				
Create a State register of trained volunteers to facilitate speedy deployment in case of natural disasters.				
Identify and ensure access to financial assistance for youth-led initiatives relating to environment.				
Promote responsible utilization of natural resources by incentivizing young entrepreneurs to setup environment friendly enterprises.				
Gender Equity				

Organise sensitization programmes for youth addressing violence/crimes against women.				
Ensure balanced representation of males, females and the third gender in youth delegations at all levels.				
Mainstream gender concerns in all youth development policies and programmes.				
Inclusion and Social Justice				
Mainstream and rehabilitate juvenile delinquents, youth in protective custody, substance dependent, surrendered militants etc.				
Set up Special Schools in every district.				
Provide disabled-friendly services.				
Provide legal protection against stigma and discrimination involving people living with HIV/AIDS, substance abuse and victims of sexual abuse.				
Ensure integration of inclusion and social justice in policies and programmes.				
Formulate Meghalaya Youth Index after every five years to assess the situation of youth and youth development in the state.				
Youth Participation:				
Establish youth clubs in each village in collaboration with NYKS and such other youth organisations.				

Establish a State Youth Council and District Youth Councils to ensure meaningful participation of youth in all policy making/governance structures on issues affecting young people.				
Promote youth participation in local self-governance structures such as village councils.				
Develop a customised Meghalaya Youth Leadership Programme to train potential youth leaders.				
Encourage political parties to promote youth participation in electoral politics at all levels.				
Encourage participation of socially and ethnically marginalised youth at all levels.				
Ensure active and substantive engagement of young people from diverse backgrounds in the state-level planning, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programmes related to the Sustainable Development Goals since progress on the SDGs will significantly influence the lives of young people.				
Promote Volunteerism by involving youth in community service through mandatory credit system in schools and higher education.				
Health and Healthy Lifestyle:				
Integrate adolescent sexual and reproductive				

health in the educational curricula.				
Setup youth-friendly health and counselling centres in sub-divisions & district level hospitals besides secondary schools, colleges and universities				
Scale up and strengthen the existing primary health care system to ensure availability, accessibility and affordability of health care services.				
Scale up and strengthen drug and alcohol de-addiction centres to cover all the sub-divisions/districts of the State.				
Conduct awareness programmes on HIV AIDS, drugs/substance abuse, cleanliness and hygiene to promote healthy behaviour.				
Strengthen functional linkages and collaboration with agencies dealing with health issues for financial resources and technical support.				
Develop a customized programme for adolescents and young people on balanced nutrition and healthy lifestyle.				
Create a cadre of trained youth ambassadors for a healthy Meghalaya.				
Design and implement targeted interventions to reduce maternal and infant mortality rate.				
Assess the situation of Youth Health to reduce the				

vulnerability of youth through comprehensive Youth Health Programme.				
Sports and recreation:				
Make recreational facilities mandatory in all educational institutions and at community levels.				
Create adequate sporting infrastructure and ensure accessibility to facilities at all levels.				
Organise sports competitions involving indigenous and modern sports starting from the block level.				
Establish an Academy of Excellence for promotion of potential sport(s) in the State.				
Promote sports for development and peace.				
Promotion of arts and crafts- both traditional and modern:				
Promote knowledge and skills about indigenous arts and crafts through the school curriculum.				
Set up arts and crafts training centres at all districts of the State.				
Ensure participation of young artists and artisans in all state, regional and national level festivals and exhibitions.				
Institute scholarships for promising artists and artisans to pursue higher academy courses.				
Institute state level awards for outstanding young artists and performers.				
Setup an Academy of Excellence for promotion of visual and performing arts.				

Conflict management and peace building:				
Organise sensitization programmes on culture of peace for members of all youth clubs.				
Create a cadre of Youth Ambassadors for Peace through a customized training programme.				
Conduct school level competitions on peace and social harmony.				